

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SANAA 002006

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/16/2014

TAGS: [KISL](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: YEMEN: AL-HOUTHI INSURGENCY CONTINUES UNABATED

REF: SANAA 1962 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.5 (b), (d).

11. (S) Summary. The conflict continues between ROYG forces and armed-supporters of rebel Shi'ite cleric al-Houthi. The fighting remains concentrated in the northern Marran mountains, although some fighting has been reported in urban centers in the Sa'da governate. Although the crisis has yet to spin out of control, senior ROYG officials continue to express concern that pockets of al-Houthi supporters are operating in other areas of the country. End Summary.

Where is the Fighting?

12. (S/NF) ROYG forces continue to battle armed supporters of rebel Shi'ite cleric al-Houthi in the mountainous Marran area around Sa'da. Fighting remains concentrated on two main peaks, but Yemeni press reports indicate for the first time that fighting has extended to the suburbs of Sa'da, causing non-combatant casualties and material damage. (Note: DATT and CT Advisor have been aware for some time of isolated fighting in urban Sa'da. Additionally the Yemen Air Forces' use of MIGs to bomb al-Houthi encampments in Marran is causing considerable collateral damage, without achieving substantial military gains. End Note.) Contrary to ROYG public statements, we believe there are roughly 20,000 Yemeni Regular Army and Central Security Forces in the region engaged with around 4000 insurgents.

Saleh Fears Expansion of the Conflict

13. (S/NF) Saleh continues to press for U.S. assistance to quell the insurgency. Expressing anxiety that the conflict may expand, senior ROYG officials have requested U.S. intelligence support to locate "isolated pockets" of al-Houthi supporters in "other areas" of the country. (Note: The USG has already provided military assistance to the Yemenis by training the Ministry of Interior's Special Central Security Forces and Army Special Forces, as well as providing Falconview Mapping technology. We have not seen evidence of the technology being put to use, but the Minister of Interior told Ambassador and DCM in a August 18 meeting that the Special CSF forces were being deployed north that evening. End Note).

14. (C) In an effort to circle the wagons, Saleh gathered Sa'da tribal sheikhs, dignitaries, and local officials in the capital on August 16, urging them to "play their role to eradicate this evil seed and to control extremism" in their region. The Sa'da elite had a mixed-response, ranging from affirmation that the al-Houthi trend was dangerous to the state and to Islam, to complaints that the Sa'da leadership was not consulted until the situation got out of control.

Could "al-Houthism" Spread?

15. (C) Comment: It is unlikely that al-Houthi's Shia teachings, modeled on the Iranian Twelver Imam school of thought, will take root in majority Sunni Yemen or gain a true following beyond the loyal students who make up his vanguard. Underlying political support for al-Houthi among Yemenis, where it exists, may be attributed to an undercurrent of anti-regime sentiment, and perhaps a certain joy in seeing Saleh's nose bloodied. The heavy casualties sustained by the ROYG forces so far can be politically absorbed if the state prevails in the near future. A prolonged conflict and/or a runaway al-Houthi may make Saleh's regime vulnerability to other potential rebels around the country.

KRAJESKI